

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

State of Wisconsin

DATE: December 7, 2005

FILE REF: 4100

TO: Scott Hassett

FROM: Randy Stark – Chief Warden

SUBJECT: 2005 Law Enforcement Nine Day Deer Gun Season Report

Nearly perfect hunting conditions, with snow and mild temperatures especially early in the season, made hunters very happy and had a positive impact on the deer harvest. Hunting pressure dropped off significantly following the opening weekend. Cold and high winds hampered hunters on Thanksgiving Day but some pressure was seen on the last Saturday until the rain started on Sunday which kept all but the most ardent hunters from venturing out into the woods. Wardens working in areas, which were under Earn a Buck rules during the 2004 season, reported significantly increased antler development on bucks taken during this season. A common remark of wardens is that *“the hunt continues to be basically a day and a half event on opening weekend.”*

Prominent issues encountered by many wardens in all DNR Regions of the state and addressed in this report include: the impact of land use practices on deer hunting, baiting and its problems, ATV use, use of camouflage hunting blinds, and the widespread confusion regarding the current deer tagging system. On a positive side, hunters seemed to generally be in a good mood. There are many anecdotes from wardens on hunters cooperating with the Department and fellow hunters and family hunting traditions being passed on to a new generation. There were no incidents to my knowledge stemming from the aftermath of the Sawyer County homicides in 2004. However, wardens did report a drop in Hmong hunter participation statewide. By most all accounts this was a year of renewal, with hunters wanting to return to Wisconsin's deer hunting tradition.

Pre-season preparation - The warden service invested considerable effort in pre-season proactive steps to reduce the potential for conflict during the season. The steps included developing Public Service Announcements (PSA's) in video, audio and print formats that were distributed to TV stations, radio stations, and print media statewide and into the Twin Cities market in Minnesota. The PSA's emphasized the importance of ethics, landowner relations, and hunter responsibility in continuing Wisconsin's hunting tradition. The media aided us greatly in getting these messages out to the public. Print and audio versions were also distributed in Hmong and Spanish language. Wardens also did many radio and TV interviews statewide in advance of the season.

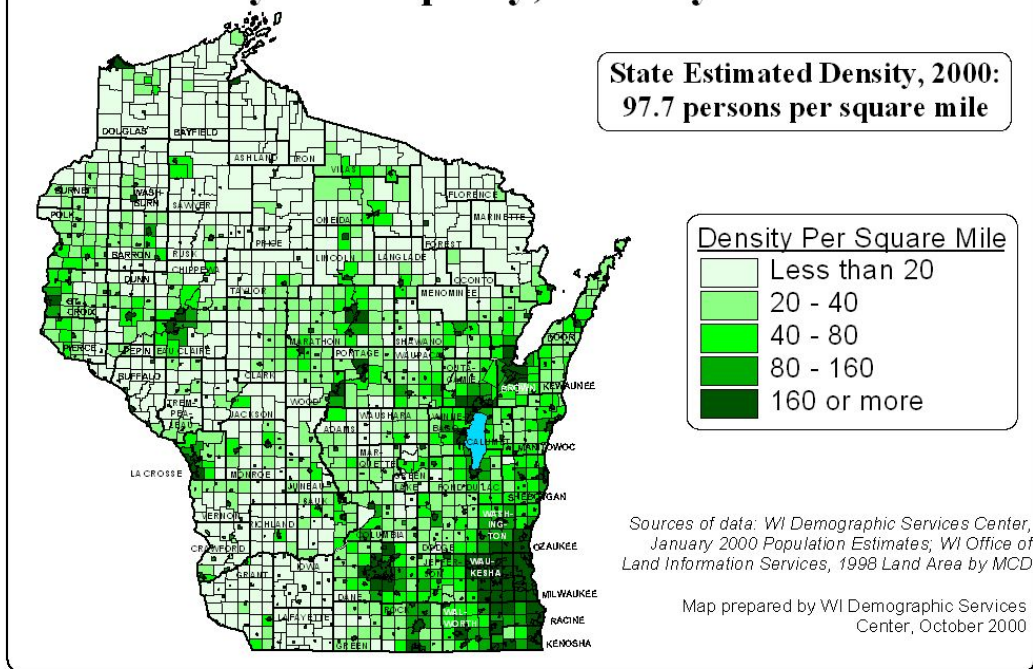
The Hmong community, Hmong Outdoor Education Foundation President Roger Xiong, DNR liaison Kou Xiong, and many other Hmong hunter education instructors made a tremendous contribution to the safety record of this year through their tireless work on hunter education efforts over the past year. The warden service looks forward to continuing and enhancing these relationships with the Hmong community.

Hunting Trends and Issues

Changing Land Use and Ownership Patterns and Urban Sprawl

Having access to a place to hunt is critical to the future of hunting. Changing land use and ownership patterns described below are a significant threat to the future of Wisconsin's hunting heritage.

Estimated Population Density in Wisconsin, by Municipality, January 2000



Urban sprawl continues to have a significant impact on deer hunting and is a growing issue throughout the entire state. Wardens in all regions continue to report and see the impacts of urban sprawl and development on Wisconsin's deer hunting tradition. Every year the number of acres both directly and indirectly impacted by "sprawl" increases and has negatively impacted hunting in many areas in the Southeast Region, many parts of the Northeast Region, eastern half of the South Central Region, areas adjacent to metropolitan centers in the West Central Region, areas adjacent to Minnesota and areas surrounding resort communities in the Northern Region. The areas most reported by wardens as being impacted by sprawl tend to correspond to the shaded areas on the above map of Wisconsin population densities.

Most wardens made comments in their reports about the increasing development in rural areas and associated reduction in hunting opportunities. Wooded areas that formerly were hunted during the gun deer season now have houses in the middle of them. Hunter numbers are down in these settings. Surrounding virtually every city and village in the affected areas of the state, there is lost access and hunting opportunity and growing concerns for safe zones of fire. Hunting in and around these developed areas often poses increased safety risks for persons and property. Along with that, these developed areas serve as refuges for deer and exacerbate the deer over-population problem. The fragmentation of the landscape into smaller holdings often owned by non-hunters is limiting hunting opportunities on many private lands. Comments like "we can't just walk out the back door and hunt anymore" were common among the veteran hunters who were used to hunting larger tracts of land owned by neighboring farms. What remains as available huntable land is with increasing frequency being leased by more financially well-off hunters.

The changing landscape and its impacts

In past years, wardens' comments on land use impacts on hunting came mostly from the eastern third and south central portions of the state. Now, however, wardens throughout the state are commenting on the changing landscape and its affect on hunting. Clearing woodlots and fields for rural residential developments and more non-hunters moving to rural areas continue to be issues affecting deer hunters.

Wardens are increasingly becoming more involved in situations dealing with hunter conflicts with non-hunters, and reduced availability of “hunnable” property. The following are comments from wardens:

- In Waukesha County, Warden Steve Sanidas reports more farm land and prime hunting areas are converted into subdivisions and commercial properties each year. Hunters in the area have stated that youth hunters no longer have opportunities to hunt near their homes, which makes it more difficult and certainly much less convenient to become involved with the sport.
- In Washington County, Warden Bob Lee reports that complaints were up arising from country subdivision residents who, seeing deer hunters, are calling the Sheriff’s Department for no reason other than to report people who are otherwise legally engaged in deer hunting. Warden Lee answered a call from a person who wanted to know how she could stop the deer hunting in the county.
- Warden Bill Mitchell, stationed for 30 years in Washington County reports that the number of people complaining about hunters shooting too close to residences is going up proportionally to the number of new homes being built on former hunting land.
- Warden Dale Hochhausen observed that this year is the worst year that he has seen for urban sprawl in the western part of Racine County. Large subdivisions and commercial businesses are rapidly expanding and quickly diminishing places that have typically been hunted in the past. Due to this urban expansion and the extended season, Hochhausen did not see many groups of deer hunters out. State wildlife areas were the only places where there seemed to be any deer hunters.
- Warden Richard Thole continues to see the impacts of urban sprawl in southern Polk County. Many housing subdivisions are popping up in traditional hunting locations making it tough to find safe areas to shoot.
- In the West Central Region wardens are seeing more conflicts between the neighboring landowners. The new landowners are less likely to make deer drives which seem to limit deer movement during the middle of the day. Many landowners ring their property with stands but do not hunt the interior to any extent. This leads to landowner conflicts when injured deer run onto the neighbor’s land or deer are shot across the line.
- Warden Rick Peters commented that hunters report that it is harder to hunt in many of the areas in southern Lincoln County as the farms get divided up into smaller parcels.
- Warden Russ Fell of Rice Lake reports that the fragmentation of land in the Barron County area has resulted in a change in the hunting behavior over the past several years. Hunting parties are smaller and more hunters are sitting the entire season. There are almost no large deer drives as was the custom five years ago. This hunting pattern, he believes, is contributing to higher deer numbers and the tendency to use baiting as a method for deer hunting.

Access to Private Lands

Land fragmentation and loss of access is concentrating more hunters on public lands and increasing the number of smaller parcels of private lands. It is increasingly difficult for deer hunters to gain access to private lands. High dollar hunting leases have become more common with parties of 2-3 hunters paying thousands of dollars to “lock down” hundreds of acres of private land. More available private hunting land is being purchased and/or leased specifically for deer hunting. These forces are compounding the access problem for people of average financial means. This is occurring in most all areas of the state.

- For example, Tigerton Lumber Company recently made the decision to remove over 10,000 acres of its property in Waupaca and Shawano Counties from the Managed Forest Law so they can close their lands to public hunting and then lease their lands for hunting at a rate of \$1600 per 40 acre tract. In addition to this lease cost, hunters will be required to follow harvest restrictions in an effort to manage for trophy deer. This will impact many, many hunters who have traditionally deer hunted these properties.
- Warden Jeremy Peery of Rusk County reports that increasing development of rural areas and land fragmentation is making it very difficult for people who do not own land to find a place to hunt. The number of hunting easements continue to increase and are going for high dollar and are generally being bought by wealthier people from the Twin Cities. This results in even more pressure on public land which is getting crowded. This is leading to some people not hunting at all during the 9-Day season.
- Warden Bob Jumbeck reports that Buffalo County is on the fast track to becoming a private hunting preserve. A major percentage of property is either being leased or owned by “big buck” hunters. More and more outfitters are popping up.
- Warden Doug Zeihen, while working in Vernon and Crawford counties captured the essence of the issues in recounting a conversation with a veteran hunter and landowner: “...we always shot at a lot of deer. We missed a lot and got a few, but we always had a good time. It was the social event of the year and looked forward to with a great deal of anticipation. Lately those farmers have died off and the land got split up amongst the kids, so the properties got smaller. Many of the properties hunting rights get leased out and you don’t know who the neighboring hunter is. Everybody just hunts their own parcel and nobody gets together anymore.” That same farmer went on to say that his neighbor had just been offered \$10,000 per year for the hunting rights on that farm. He went on to say “That will pay your taxes for the year.” It was obvious that he would welcome the money for his own farm, but would mourn the loss of traditions past. In discussing how leasing land had changed the complexion of deer hunting, he agreed that the money is hard to turn down, but that something was being lost. No more could the less fortunate in the area afford to hunt private land – he felt “hunting was becoming a ”rich man’s game.”
- Warden Tom Kroeplin of Woodruff writes, “There are several areas of land in big blocks that are being bought by the public from the paper company, more land is being posted. Several groups of hunters complained that they could not hunt on these lands any more and some of them have been hunting these lands for years. I ran into one hunter who said he has been hunting a certain stand for many years and cannot hunt it anymore because the land is now posted no hunting. The hunter said he has shot over 20 bucks off this stand and was going to give up hunting because he had no place to hunt any more.”
- Warden Bill Engfer reports “After this year, twelve tracts of land that were privately owned in Buffalo County by one family and held open to the public in the past will be leased. The leases will be auctioned off on a sealed bid with the minimum bid of \$20 per acre and a minimum of a 40 acre lease. These leases are expected to go quite high and this will eliminate several thousand acres that were open to the public in the past for hunting.”
- Warden Engfer also reports that during the 9 day deer hunting season an outfitter’s client had trespassed on another’s land where they shot a large buck. When confronted by the landowner and the Deputy Sheriff, the outfitter agreed to pay the landowner just under \$5,000 (the fee that the shooter and his partner paid the outfitter to go hunting). The outfitter felt it was better to pay the fee and keep the deer so that his client would be happy.

Hunter/User Conflicts:

There were hunter/user conflicts reported to wardens throughout the state and most seem to relate to conflicts between neighboring property owners and frequently associated with the preceding land use issues. Other than in Sawyer County, the number of trespassing incidents was similar to previous years. However, Wardens Sue Miller and Brian Knepper reported that in Sawyer County, trespass complaints were noticeably down, noting that people seemed to be more courteous about boundaries this year. Perhaps this occurred as a result of last year's tragedy. Wardens responded to several hunter harassment complaints. The Sawyer County incident seems to have caused people to get law enforcement involved right away instead of confronting problems themselves. The following are some examples of hunter conflicts noted in warden reports:

- Warden Brad Biser of Douglas County received a complaint of a hunter walking over to another hunter's bait pile and urinating on it. He tossed the other hunters mineral block into a puddle and told the other hunter that he was lucky he did not defecate in the bait pile. The back tag number was noted and a written statement was taken. The follow-up investigation continues with a case of hunter harassment. The suspect has a long history of unethical practices.
- Wardens Barry Fetting and Jeremy Peery of Rusk County investigated two incidents where the subjects, who were violating game laws, were also found to be trespassing. The landowner in the first case held the subjects on the roadway near their vehicle until a Sheriff's Deputy and Warden Fetting arrived. The landowner was very upset and told Fetting that these types of hunting/trespassing violations have been occurring on his property for the past six years. Citations were issued to the subjects in question for loan and borrow deer carcass tag, hunting after hours and failure to immediately validate deer carcass tag. They were also cited for trespassing by the Sheriff's Deputy.
- In another Rusk County trespass incident a landowner observed a male subject being dropped off on his property by an individual driving a truck. The landowner watched as the man walked onto his property and shot a buck in the landowner's field. The landowner then confronted the man while in the field and brandished a handgun. Fetting and Perry responded to the incident and investigated. The individual received a citation from the Sheriff's Department for trespassing.
- Warden Heather Gottschalk (Beaver Dam) and a Dodge County deputy responded to a call of trespassing and threats. The complainant told Gottschalk that she saw a man drive into the hunting property they leased to hunt. When she approached him and told him that he was trespassing, the suspect said, "Remember what happened last year." Gottschalk and the deputy approached the suspect at his residence and he told them that he knew what he was doing was wrong and that the land was posted, but used the excuse that he was retrieving his wounded deer as he was required to. When Gottschalk asked what his intent was when he stated, "Remember what happened last year" he stated he needed to protect himself. Gottschalk and the deputy had both individuals agree not to have contact with one another and if they had another trespass issue to contact the Sheriff's office instead of making contact with the trespasser. Both subjects were calm upon leaving their premises.
- A defendant allegedly involved in the trespass and battery of a landowner in Sauk County last deer season was caught trespassing again on the same property. The hunter was contacted by several hunters on the property and they recognized the name of the hunter. The hunter tried to pay money to the people that caught him so he would not be reported since he was out on bail for the previous incident. One condition of his bail was that he was to not have contact with the landowner he assaulted or be on the landowner's property. Warden David Horzewski (Reedsburg) and Deputy

Warden Paul Zajackowski assisted the Sauk County Sheriff's Department with attempting to locate the suspect. The hunter was located the next day and arrested for felony bail jumping.

- Warden Kyle Drake of Waukesha County made contact with one hunter who was walking out at closing time. He had earlier had a confrontation with a trespassing hunter. The trespasser was very belligerent and threatened the other hunter. The trespasser was not wearing a backtag. The other hunter did the correct thing and just walked away. A search was made for the trespasser, but he had left and did not return the next day.
- Warden Jason Roberts of Racine County received a complaint of shots being fired in the town of Caledonia by some goose hunters. The complainant did not like hearing the loud shots in the morning. The local police responded to the area, but the hunters were complying with all state and local municipal laws. Roberts explained to the complainant that the hunters were hunting legally and abiding by both state and local laws. The complainant threatened to try and scare the geese in the future to keep people from hunting in the field across from her home. Roberts explained to the complainant that by doing so she would be violating a state law and would be charged. The complainant protested that everyone wants to protect the hunter and no one is concerned about her well-being or peace of mind.
- Warden Joe Paul, working in Racine County, spoke with one hunter who was concerned about ATVs riding on land near where he hunts. The hunter said that horseback riders use the property as well. The owner of the property contacted the ATVers and the horseback riders and asked them not to recreate on his land. The hunter said the ATVers and the horseback riders were upset over this. The same hunter advised he owns seven acres in Pleasant Prairie that he no longer hunts on because he gets harassed every time he hunts there. The hunter set up a stand for his father this year on the property. When the hunter's father went to hunt the stand, someone had cut the metal rungs in the ladder and the platform so whoever used it would fall out.
- Wardens Jennifer Niemeyer and Joe Paul in Kenosha County contacted a waterfowl hunter who said people were harassing him while he was hunting. The location where he was hunting used to be a legal area to hunt. Recently the property has been annexed by the city of Kenosha. As the city gets larger, hunters are finding it more difficult to find land to hunt on and contact with those opposed to hunting is increasing.
- In La Crosse County, one landowner/hunter was reported to have fired three shots at a neighboring landowner/hunter participating in a deer drive on the neighboring property. According to the complainants, the hunter had made threats to anyone getting close to his property in the past. Warden Henry Bauman (Onalaska) and Deputy Warden Julie Modjeski investigated the complaint with La Crosse County Deputies. Deputies arrested the suspect for reckless endangerment by use of a firearm based on witness statements and direction from the La Crosse County DA. The wardens also cited the man for hunting with an improper license since he had no valid tags left in his possession while hunting alone.
- Opening day, Warden Bill Miller (Adams) was called in on a dispute over a deer that both parties said they shot. At first they were told that whoever killed it gets it, which was relayed to the hunters by a friend who had the cell phone. This caused the hunter who did not put the killing bullet in the deer to become angry and shoot the dead deer 5-8 times with his rifle and stating "You can have the %&#@ deer". There were two other people nearby when this happened. Warden Miller will be referring the case to the Adams County District Attorney for a criminal charge of Negligent Operation or Handling of a Firearm.

- Warden Dean Gullickson (Chippewa Falls) assisted a Chippewa County Sheriff's Department investigator in a case involving the theft of a dozen tree stands over two years. A camera was set up on a tree stand in the area of the thefts. The bandit struck again, stealing the decoy tree stand. When the suspect was confronted he confessed to stealing the decoy tree stand but swore he hadn't taken any others. After further questioning, with the warden and investigator pointing out a drag trail from a ladder stand that went to his property, the suspect confessed to stealing that tree stand also but swore he had not taken any others.
- In a trespassing incident in St Croix County a landowner was assaulted for kicking a group of deer hunters off his property. The assailant was intoxicated. The landowner simply left the scene and called the Sheriff's Office. Warden Rick Rosen (Hudson) responded to the scene after recognizing the names of the suspect(s). In addition, Warden Rosen's investigation of the subject resulted in an illegal buck that was taken after hours during the October Zone T season with a rifle in a shotgun zone. Warden Rosen seized a .243 Caliber rifle.

Hunting Methods – Increasingly, hunters tend to move less and hunt from “deer stands” that provide more and more “comforts of home”. With improved clothing, portable heaters, portable blinds, permanent elevated shacks, cell phones/FM Radios, ATV's, etc., hunters can participate in the hunt very comfortably without moving much. Other trends affecting hunting include:

- **Camouflage Blinds** - Wardens are noticing a trend towards the use of camouflage enclosures used while hunting deer. This hinders the blaze orange clothing requirement and prompts fears that such use will eventually be a factor in hunting related shootings. Hunters have also expressed their concerns relating to the use of camouflage hunting blinds, which totally conceal hunters in the field. While there have been no reported shooting related incidents to this point, the public is urging the Department to take steps to minimize the risk of an unwanted shooting incident.
- **ATV Use** - A trend of using ATVs in order to illegally place tree stands, bait or to access State property or operation on roadways is a growing problem. There was a 105% increase in ATV roadway violations this year. In some parts of the state some wardens have commented that illegal use of ATVs on public land is increasing. Wardens reported that many illegal ATV trails lead to illegal permanent stands and in many cases, illegal bait piles. The use of ATVs and associated baiting is a huge time commitment for investigating wardens both before and during the season to track down violators. Most of the baits are well off the road requiring considerable time to investigate. With two wardens in most counties and with most of the illegal baiters/ATV operators hunting but two days, it becomes exceedingly challenging to gain compliance.
- **Baiting and Feeding Trends:** **The most common violations encountered by wardens this past deer season were baiting violations. Two hundred and twenty one (221) cases were cited by wardens - up 47% over the 2004 deer season.** Baiting and illegal ATV use continue to generate many complaints given to wardens. The most common complaint of hunters to wardens was using too much bait. Hunters providing their observation comments say that deer movement is very limited due to the widespread use of bait. ATV's are commonly used illegally and unethically through public forests and across waterways to haul bait into remote areas. Baiting violations are occurring across the state. In the Southeast Region, Warden Supervisor Joe Jerich reports that baiting arrests are up significantly in his area. Arrests for baiting on opening weekend in his area exceeded that of the entire season in 2004.

In addition to the disease related concerns associated with baiting and feeding, the warden service is greatly concerned about the broader social issues associated with baiting and feeding. Baiting and feeding contributes to a constellation of issues that arguably are not in the best interest of the future of hunting or the image of hunters. These include:

- **Conflict between landowners that in turn spawns unethical conduct.**
- **Arguments between hunters over baited areas on public lands that leads to ruined hunting experiences.**
- **Creating vulnerability for opportunistic poaching of deer at night with lights at feeding stations associated with cabins and residences.**
- **Concentrating deer on the property of those who can put out the most bait most often.**
- **An over-reliance on baiting as a hunting method is resulting in a generation of hunters who know no other way to hunt deer than sitting over a baitpile.**
- **Issues associated with baiting consumes tremendous amounts of day and night enforcement time and operational resources of the warden service.**
- **Baiting alters natural movement patterns of the deer, creates refuges for deer, reduces opportunity to harvest deer by those who don't bait, all of which frustrate population control efforts.**

Each year, wardens encounter more hunters who are becoming increasingly frustrated with baiting and what it is doing to the hunting experience. Many say even though they don't like baiting, they still do it in order to compete. These same people wish baiting was not legal so they did not have to engage in "competitive baiting". Initially, wardens thought the two gallon rule might be a solution. However, after working with it, wardens now believe that as long as baiting and feeding is legal in some form, we'll continue to have all the problems associated with it.

In Minnesota, where baiting is prohibited, wardens there experienced an increased incidence of illegal baiting. This got media attention and resulted in editorials that reflected negatively on hunting written by non-hunters. If they had been neutral non-hunters prior to the reading about the illegal baiting, the tone of the editorials suggested they were not neutral non-hunters anymore and baiting was responsible for moving them off center on hunting.

Hunting related shooting incidents:

In all regions of the state wardens investigated shooting incidents.

In the Northeast Region:

- **On Saturday, November 19th, a hunter in Waupaca County was seated on a folding chair when he saw a deer and cocked the pistol he was holding and brought it into a shooting position. Unable to get a shot, this individual was in the process of de-cocking the weapon with a gloved hand when the gun discharged striking him in the middle toe on his foot.**
- **On Thursday, November 24th Warden Supervisor Bob Goerlinger (Peshtigo), Deputy Warden Ron Kazmierczak (Green Bay) and Warden Steve Daye (Green Bay) investigated a fatal hunting related shooting incident which occurred near Coleman in Marinette County. A 14 year old was shot in the back with a 12 gauge slug discharged from a firearm being used by a 12 year old while walking out of the woods after a deer drive.**
- **On Friday, November 25th Wardens Amie Egstad (Neenah), Chris Groth (Green Bay), and Mike Young (Shiocton) investigated a non fatal shooting incident which took place on Oneida Tribal property in Outagamie County. The victim and shooter were members of the same hunting party on**

stands when the injury occurred. The shooter shot once at a deer in dense cover and struck the victim 633 feet away with a 12-gauge slug. The victim was struck in the right hip where the slug angled down and shattered the femur. The victim was flown out by helicopter to the hospital for treatment. The investigation the next morning indicated the shooter shot high causing the slug to strike the victim.

- On Friday, November 25th a hunter in Marinette County was following a wounded buck blood-trail and met with other members of the hunting party at a vehicle. This hunter was standing outside of a vehicle and grabbed the action of the lever action rifle and apparently set the hammer; the firearm discharged into his right foot.
- In Kewaunee County, Warden Darren Kuhn (Kewaunee) came across a situation where a slug from a hunter's firearm struck a barn. The farmer was very upset and Warden Kuhn controlled the situation until Sheriff's Deputies arrived. Once the Sheriff's Department arrived, Warden Kuhn remained with the hunters collecting their information and keeping them away from the angry farmer who was dealing with the Sheriff's Department. As it turned out, the hunter involved in this shooting had fired five shots at a deer standing broadside that was about 50 yards away. The hunter missed the deer with all five shots but hit the barn once, which was about 200 yards away. Warden Kuhn collected all five empty shell casing and determined that the hunter was about 100 feet from the centerline of the road. The farmer chose not to file a complaint as long as the hunter paid for the damage to the barn. All worked out, but the situation could have been much worse since the farmer had been working in the barn that had been shot.
- In Manitowoc County there were two reported instances of houses being struck by bullets which were investigated by the Manitowoc County Sheriff's Department.
- In Shawano County, a landowner was outside watching a deer drive on land across from his house. A deer skirted out the side behind the drivers. Two standers shot at the deer. One of the bullets struck a rear window of a pickup truck parked in the landowner's driveway. Environmental Warden Stephan Fabian (Green Bay) responded and investigated the incident. It was determined that one of the standers was only about 17 feet from the edge of the road and shot 3 times at the running deer with one of the shots striking the parked vehicle.
- In Fond du Lac County, Warden Ben Nadolski (Waupun) assisted the Fond du Lac County Sheriff's Department investigating the report of a house being struck by a bullet. Warden Nadolski located the shooter and held that person until the Deputy arrived. It was determined that this individual had fired three times at a deer with a .308 scoped handgun. One of the bullets struck the second story of the home, traveling through two walls, about 1.5 feet above the head of a teenage girl at her computer. The Fond du Lac County Sheriff's Department is taking the lead in this case.

In the Northern Region:

- Wardens Jeremy Peery and Barry Fetting in Rusk County responded to one hunting related shooting incident. The victim was a 26 year old New Auburn man who was hunting on private property with friends. At approximately 1:00 PM on November 26, 2005 the victim was walking along a field's edge when a deer emerged from the drive directly in front of him. The victim shot once at the deer then watched as the deer ran between him and another member of his hunting party who was standing approximately 300 yards away from him. As the deer ran between the victim and the other hunter, the victim heard a shot and realized that the other hunter had shot him in the thigh. The victim was transported to Ladysmith Hospital where treatment was initiated for his injuries. The shooter in the incident was immediately identified. The incident took place in an open, picked corn field. The

shooter had a clear unobstructed view of the victim. The victim's hunting clothing did meet the blaze orange requirements.

- Warden Peery and the Rusk County Sheriff's Department received a complaint of an individual's house being shot by a suspected hunter.
- Warden Paul Martin responded to a fatal hunting accident on opening day in Burnett County. A deer hunter was fatally shot by a member of his hunting party while participating in a deer drive. The victim was a stander and was shot by a driver. The victim was out of sight of the driver. Four hunters fired nine shots at two running deer when the victim was struck.
- Warden Jesse Ashton responded to a complaint of a house that was shot. The shooter was identified and admitted to shooting at a buck near the house which was located across the road. The subject was participating in a deer drive where several drivers walked through the city limits without guns.

In the South Central Region:

- There was one non-fatal self-inflicted hunting incident in southern Grant County investigated by Wardens Rick DeWitte (Cassville) and Marty Stone (Fennimore) on the opening day of the season. A 15 year old female fell on slippery terrain and received injuries to her right leg when her .243 rifle discharged accidentally. There was extensive muscle damage to her leg, but no damage to tendons or bone. She was taken by private car to Platteville hospital and then med-flighted to UW Madison for surgery. She was released from the hospital one week later.

In the Southeast Region:

- In Racine County, Warden Dale Hochhausen assisted the Racine County Sheriff's Department with an investigation of locating the person responsible for shooting a shotgun slug that traveled through two bedrooms in the upstairs of a residence.
- In Waukesha County, one incident was reported regarding a self-inflicted accident where a muzzleloader accidentally discharged and hit the victim in the hand while in a deer stand.
- In Sheboygan County, Wardens Clutter, Plenke, Bilgo, Preder and Deputy Warden David Nett assisted with the investigation of an incident occurring in Sheboygan County. On Saturday, 11/26/05, a 14-year old hunter was shot in the forearm before 6:15 AM by an 81-year old hunter from a different hunting group on state land.
- On 11/19/05 in Ozaukee County, a victim was a member of a deer drive. A buck deer ran within fifteen yards of the victim in line with the other standers and drivers. A shooter in the deer drive fired three shots at a buck, hitting the victim while swinging on game. A fragment from one of the slugs hit the victim on the left foot on the top of the big toe.

In the West Central Region:

- In Eau Claire County a deer hunter was driving to his hunting spot in his pickup truck when a shotgun slug entered the driver's door at door handle height and struck the lone occupant in his side. The man was able to drive 12 miles to Cadott where he was met by EMS and the helicopter ambulance. The victim is an EMT and used his portable radio to report the incident and to give progress reports as he drove towards the hospital. In this case a hunter in a deer drive appears to have fired at the truck, failing to fully identify his target.
- In Chippewa County there was a fatal accident where a family group was conducting a deer drive. A deer was kicked up and ran between two members of the group. One member shot at the deer striking

a 46 year old female family member in the chest. She was pronounced dead at the scene. The woman was a driver in the group when she was shot by another driver.

- There were two hunting accidents that occurred in Marathon County during the deer season. Both incidents were non-fatal and involved gun shots to the legs of the victims. One was a same party accident, with the other one being a two party accident (victim was not hunting at the time of the accident, but was in the woods without any blaze orange). In both cases, the shooter was shooting at deer.
- In Dunn County there were two separate incidents where hunters were shooting at deer near highways. In both incidents a car was struck by a bullet as their cars were traveling on the roadway. No one was injured.
- Also in Dunn County, Warden Jim Cleven assisted the Sheriff's Department with an incident where a deer hunter shot and killed a large black colored horse. The shooter thought the horse was a deer. The case is being referred to the District Attorney for possible charges.

Hunters in a "Positive" light

Deer Ice Rescue - Wardens Mike Stahl (Oconto Falls) and Steve Daye (Green Bay) responded to a call of three deer through the ice on Chute Pond in Oconto County. Upon arrival, the wardens observed several hunters attempting to rescue the deer with the use of a canoe. All subjects out on the ice were wearing PFD's, and they were successful in retrieving all three deer from the water. Warden Stahl assisted in getting the last one out. Of the three deer, two survived and one died from stress.

Hunter In Training – Warden Mike Young checked a group of fathers and sons who were hunting on public land. One son was eleven years old and had a home computer generated backtag that read "Hunter In Training."

Good Judgment – Warden Todd Wippermann (Clintonville) spoke to one father/son that had a huge buck standing very close to them and just before legal shooting hours on opening day. There were illegal shots heard all around them but they refrained from shooting at this deer. When legal hours opened the buck had walked off and they never got a shot. However, they can be proud that they were ethical hunters.

Gallant Rescue – Warden Russ Fell of Rice Lake reports that a 22 year old Rice Lake man waded out in frigid waters over his waist and tossed a rope to a floundering hunter who had fallen through thin ice to retrieve a dead deer. The young rescuer pulled the victim to safety and then notified EMS. The older hunter was treated for hypothermia. The older hunter was in water over his head and would have certainly drowned had it not been for the heroic efforts of his rescuer.

It Pays to Ask First - Warden Tom Kroeplin of Minocqua checked a group of hunters who were making a drive and wounded a deer. The deer ran onto private land that was posted. They asked if they could go get the deer. They were told they would have to get permission from the landowner. One of the hunters said they would not be able to get the deer because the landowner is a non-hunter. Before leaving the group they did contact the landowner to see if they could get the deer. The landowner gave them permission to get the deer and even helped them get the deer and drag the deer out of the woods. The landowner's response surprised the hunters to say the least.

Be a "Big Brother" - Warden Boyd Richter (Janesville) checked a 14 year old hunter from the state of Oregon. The youth's father passed away the previous year, so a friend of the youth's father bought an airline ticket and invited the youth to come to Wisconsin. Richter talked with the adult who said he was a

friend of the youth's father since high school and wanted to do something for the youth. Richter talked with the adult later in the week and learned that after Richter contacted them, the young hunter shot a doe on opening day.

Passing on the Tradition - Warden Rick DeWitte (Cassville) contacted a group of hunters near Cassville consisting of a grandfather, father and son. The father, accompanied by his 8 year old son, harvested a buck deer. The father stated that he was looking for a "big buck," but when another buck came by his stand, he shot it to show his son the process of deer hunting from start to finish (preparation for the hunt, opening day festivities, watching for deer, shooting and killing a buck, tagging, and field dressing the deer). During the ensuing conversation, the boy asked his father how old he had been when he had first tagged along while deer hunting. His father responded "about 9 years old." It was evident that the 8 year old son had enjoyed his deer hunting experience.

Helping Hands Across Generations - Warden Heather Gottschalk (Beaver Dam) spoke with two hunters who were hunting a very heavily used piece of public property in Columbia County. They explained how they came across an older hunter who had shot a trophy buck on private property and was tracking it onto the public land. The buck entered onto the state land where the older hunter ran into the other hunters. The older hunter explained his situation to the young hunters and the two gave up their hunt to help the older hunter track his buck. With their help, they found the deer.

A Hunt to Remember – During a pouring rain, Warden Bob Lee of Slinger checked a father and son on the last day of deer season coming out to the road with a doe. The father and 14 year old son hunted seven of the nine days without seeing a deer until his son shot the doe. With rain pouring down on him, the dripping wet son smiled and said "it was his best hunt ever."

A Plan Perfectly Executed - Warden Kyle Drake contacted one group of hunters that had finished up a deer drive. The group drove a section of property where one of the hunters had a photo of a nice buck taken by a trail camera. The group put a 78 year old on one of the best stands. Things worked out perfectly and the 78 year old harvested the beautiful 9-pointer.

Ethical Hunting - In the morning on the opening day of the season, Wardens Matt Modjeski (Sparta) and Bill Yearman (Eau Claire) responded to a dispute over who shot and harvested a large antlered buck. The mother of a youth hunter contacted Modjeski after a hunter from another hunting group claimed ownership. The wardens met with the hunters and interpreted the evidence at the scene. The older hunter who tagged the deer realized he had not harvested the deer. Warden Yearman took photos of the hunters exchanging ownership of the deer and Warden Modjeski issuing a Replacement Deer Tag. The young hunter, who was hunting with his parents harvested his first deer. In the end, everyone was extremely happy with the outcome. This is a great example of hunters "driving conflict from the woods". The story will be forwarded to Warden Supervisor Steve Dewald for consideration in the WI DNR / La Crosse Tribune Hunter Ethics Award.

Doing the Right Thing - When Warden Ken Thomson (Fall Creek) received a call about a hunting accident in Eau Claire County, he was told that there was no suspected shooter and that there may be a large group of hunters making deer drives in the area. Because of the circumstances he thought that it would take a lot of time to investigate the scene and try to determine who the shooter was. Shortly after arriving at the scene a man drove up to a deputy and said that if a man had been shot in a truck he thought he might be the shooter. It turned out that the man had been hunting in the area and had walked from a hunting camp about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile away and then returned to the camp on foot. When he fired the shot he did not know how close he was to the road and did not see the truck that he hit. When he saw the truck he was afraid that he may have hit it, but after talking with his hunting party decided that he did not. When

he got back to camp he heard sirens and wanted to do the right thing if he hurt someone. Warden and deputies may have been able to track him down but he sure saved a lot of time by doing the right thing.

Highlighted cases

During the gun deer season conservation wardens issued 1280 citations/criminal complaints for a variety of violations. This was a 10% increase in arrests from 2004 deer season. The most prevalent violation this year was for illegal baiting and feeding violations (221 citations issued). The next most prevalent violation was for persons who had loaded or uncased firearms in or on vehicles.

Arrest Summary During the Nine Day Season

2005 Rank	2004 Rank	Violation	2005	2004	% Change
1	1	Illegal use of bait – Firearms	221	150	47%
2	2	Trans. loaded gun in vehicle	102	113	-10%
3	3	Trans. uncased gun in vehicle	75	84	-11%
4	7	Failure to validate tag	67	57	18%
5	4	Hunt w/in 50' of paved road center	51	75	-32%
6	13	Operate ATV on roadway	45	22	105%
7	5	Shoot w/in 50' of a road or across roadway	39	65	-40%
8	23	Hunt deer in wrong quota area	36	10	260%
9	8	Hunt deer or bears before or after hours	32	27	19%
10	6	Hunt with improper license	31	61	-49%
11	10	Loaded gun on an ATV	24	27	-11%
12	30	Hunt without a license	23	8	188%

Summary by Year	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001
Total Number of Violations	1280	1156	1259	1240	1340
Juvenile	45	37	32	28	38
Adult	1235	1119	1227	1212	1302

Seizures During the Nine Day Season					
Summary by Year	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001
Total Number of Seizures					
Illegal Deer	200	205	164	172	150
Illegal Bear	6	4	5	3	5
Other	99	72	76	98	99
Car kill Deer	21	17	20	16	20

Baiting & Feeding Violations – Wardens expended considerable effort in pursuing baiting and feeding violations and illegal cabin shooting. Wardens working these violations express a similar sentiment that is best articulated by a warden in the Northern Region:

“Feeding is a huge contributing factor to cabin shooting. If feeding was eliminated it would go a long way to stop the cabin shooting problem. Otherwise nice deer will be taken illegally at night by unethical hunters and the lawful hunter will not have any opportunity at shooting that nice deer because it will have been shot at night over a feeder. Virtually every night that I worked cabin shooters I here other shots in the distance in every direction. Working these situations is time consuming, frustrating and difficult. The department has got to do everything it can to eliminate this poaching of deer. Cabin shooting is like a cancer, it’s growing out of control.”

Following are some examples of cases made for illegal baiting violations. It should be noted that illegal baiting is often associated with other violations:

- Warden Mike Young of Shiocton and Regional Warden Goetsch located a “truck load” of cabbage near a hunting cabin in Waupaca County near the end of the gun season. The landowner will be contacted and requested to clean up the material as soon as possible and cited for the feeding violation.
- *“I’d Like to Report a Violation”* - Warden Supervisor Bob Goerlinger (Peshtigo) and Environmental Warden Stefan Fabian (Green Bay) spent a good deal of time opening day on responding to a tip about some illegal activities in a remote area on Forest Service lands in Oconto County. The investigation led to the discovery of four illegal stands accessed by ATVs, four excessive baits, three untagged deer and a fraud license.
- Wardens Lance Burns (Douglas County) and Mark DiSalvo (Bayfield County) contacted a subject who had put out approximately 30 gallons of corn. It was determined he placed out 600 pounds of corn in two different locations. Warden Burns had received a complaint from a citizen that saw it from an airplane the week before. The bait was hidden under a spruce tree on private property. Further investigation revealed the subject had shot a nice 8 point buck over the bait on opening day and did not tag the deer. The deer was hanging in a tree 75 yards away from his cabin. Subject said he was just too lazy to tag the deer and said he did not think he would shoot another buck, but he couldn’t explain why he was out hunting again with a loaded gun. Criminal charges to be filed and gun and deer seized.
- In another incident, Wardens Burns and DiSalvo worked an ongoing cabin shooting complaint. The subject shot a deer at 10 PM with his 13 year old son present. The subject had the young boy assist with his crime by having him cover up the blood at the bait site and assist with gutting and dragging the deer. There was over 100 gallons of feed behind the cabin that was illuminated by a light. Violations of shine and shoot deer, possess untagged deer, and hunt over approximately 100 gallons of bait were discovered. Two deer and a rifle were seized; charges pending. The landowner was also charged for an illegal feeding violation as he was the one who had been feeding all fall and placed out the excessive amount.
- In another incident Wardens Burns and DiSalvo contacted a subject about illegal feed by a cabin. Warden Burns had found the illegal feed at the cabin earlier noting that there was an illegal gravity feeder and too much feed placed out. At the cabin the wardens found fresh blood by the feeder. Investigation revealed the subject had shot a doe deer at 4:00 AM with the aid of a light over the feed by the cabin with a bow and arrow. Subject said he and his friends had talked about how the feeding and baiting made the deer go nocturnal during the deer season because of the hunting pressure during

the day and the fact there is plenty of food out for the deer so they don't have to move around to get enough food. The soon to be defendant said he wished that baiting and feeding was outlawed.

- Warden Lance Burns investigated a complaint of a deer that was registered as a gun kill but was killed by an arrow. The interview and investigation revealed the subject shot the deer at night over a lighted bait pile from his cabin on the Friday night before the gun season started. The buck was shot with a crossbow. Afterwards, the subject said all baiting and feeding should be eliminated, at least during the gun season because it's too tempting when a big buck comes into the lighted bait pile.
- Wardens Dan Michels (Price County) and Jason Roberts (Racine County) responded to a complaint of a hunter hunting while revoked. The subject was in the cabin with his son but admitted to placing about 250 pounds of corn by a stand near the cabin and another 200 pounds of corn by two stands used by his father. The 10 year old son also told the wardens he and his father hunted from the stand by the cabin the previous day. Two citations were issued for placing and hunting over illegal bait.
- Wardens Barry Fetting and Jeremy Peery in Rusk County followed up on each baiting and feeding complaint that they received prior to and during the season. On the opening morning of the season Fetting and Peery issued three citations for hunting over bait in excess of legal limits on three separate properties. The first was issued to an individual who owns approximately 300 acres. The subject told the Wardens that he maintained three different gravity box type feeders, each capable of holding hundreds of gallons of corn. The subject also stated that he started baiting on his property around the year 2002 and has maintained the sites year around since then. Another individual had three stands set up and had well over 100 gallons spread throughout those stands. While another individual, an out of state landowner, had over 200 pounds spread out between his two stands. The troubling thing in all of these cases was that the deer tended to stay on those properties as tracks in the snow indicated lots of deer in the baited areas with noticeably fewer tracks in the surrounding areas. This was confirmed by speaking to the neighboring landowners who observed very few, if any deer during that time period.
- Wardens Rick Peters, Gary Eddy, and Ron Nerva responded to a DNR hotline report of a couple of shots fired near a Gleason area home at around 6:30 PM on the second Saturday of the season. Upon investigation, Wardens located a lighted bait pile in the back yard, and a dead doe behind the garage. The home owner shot the deer with a 30-06 when it came in to feed under the yard light.
- Wardens Brian Knepper and Chris Wunrow of Washburn County contacted two hunters on private property hunting over too much bait. The hunting party had deposited about 167 pumpkins on 9 acres of land. There were a total of three baited stands (each stand with over 50 pumpkins underneath).
- Warden Susan Miller of Sawyer County had numerous baiting and feeding complaints in Sawyer County. She had been concentrating on violations in the Elk zone due to problems associated with baiting/feeding and the elk herd. Twelve citations were issued for baiting violations and numerous warnings for baits that were over the 2-gallon limit. One man had a large feeder that he had one ton of corn delivered to on October 14th by a feed truck. The feeder is solar powered and set up outside his seasonal cabin in the heart of the elk zone.
- On the opening day Wardens Mike Sealander of Vilas County and Tim Ebert issued nine citations for hunting over excessive bait. Several of the cases involved out of state residents baiting with several hundred pounds of corn in illegal feeders.

- Warden Dave Youngquist (Spring Green) got a complaint from a hunter. The hunter stated he was not seeing any turkeys this year and that he had shoot several deer during the early season that were full of shelled corn. Youngquist walked the property late the Friday night before season and found where corn had been spread all over the ATV trails. Youngquist and Warden Tom Van Haren (Madison) contacted the landowner on Saturday morning at his hunting camp and he admitted to placing corn year around for the wildlife on his 200 acres. Youngquist cited the landowner for illegal feeding of wildlife and for baiting of deer. Without this tip of seemingly irrelevant information, this would have been a very difficult case to make.
- Warden Bill Miller (Adams) contacted a hunter over a corn pile in Adams County, where baiting is banned. The hunter said he had been putting out a 100 pound bag of corn each week during the fall to attract deer to his stand. He also said he had gone through one and a half tons of corn this year behind his house where he does not hunt. He was cited, ordered to clean up the corn and cease the feeding.
- Warden Scott Thiede (Eau Claire) and Bill Schwengel (Eau Claire) were surprised to find rainbow colored corn on the ground while checking a hunting camp in northern Eau Claire County. Suspicions were confirmed when the wardens located two discarded seed corn bags near the cabin. On the bags were written the words TREATED CORN. A friend of the landowner stated he had placed the chemically treated corn to “feed the deer.” A citation was issued for feeding in excess of the 2-gallon limit and the corn was disposed of properly.
- Warden Korey Trowbridge (Schofield) issued three citations for hunting over or placing illegal bait material. One of these hunters also told Trowbridge that the bait served to keep the deer on his land so that the neighbors would not get them.
- Warden Dan Maxinoski (Marshfield) arrested a deer hunter for hunting over an electronic metal feeder that he had purchased from Cabela’s for \$210. Maxinoski and Warden Randy Falstad also found a bait pile behind a hunting trailer in Wood County. The owner had placed about 35 gallons of apples, pumpkins and corn from an elevated feeder on to the ground.
- Warden Roy Kubisiak (Central Office) contacted a hunter who had placed illegal bait in Portage County. By the time Warden Kubisiak arrived, the suspect had shot and killed a 9-point buck over the illegal bait. The deer was seized and the violator cited.

Theft of Deer Cases

- Warden Wade Romberg (Appleton) was notified on opening weekend that a large buck that had been killed through the fence of a deer farm and was then taken through the fence, which had been cut. Receiving a tip through DNR’s Hotline, Warden Romberg relayed this information to the Outagamie and Calumet County Sheriff’s Department since this was considered theft of property. Warden Romberg and Warden Supervisory George Protogere (Green Bay) were asked to assist with the case as Warden Romberg had previous knowledge of the suspect and the case details. After a standoff at the suspect’s residence, officers were eventually able to make contact with the persons involved and they were able to recover the trophy whitetail deer which was hanging in the garage. The deer farm owner was very appreciative to get his deer back (estimated value over \$5,000) and know that the persons involved were apprehended.
- ***Heads Up Work to Recover Stolen Deer!*** - Warden Amie Egstad (Neenah) overheard radio traffic about a deer being stolen out of someone’s yard in Waupaca County. The information indicated that the suspects may be heading east on STH 96 in a white car with the deer in the trunk. Warden Egstad stopped at a gas station at STH 76 and STH 96 and within 1 minute a car meeting the description drove into the gas station. Warden Egstad made contact with the vehicle operator as the passenger

left the scene. The passenger was later identified with follow-up by local Probation Parole Agent. The subjects will be charged with larceny of game (\$2,123 ticket) as well as uncased bow that was in the vehicle. The hunter and homeowner were very happy to get their deer returned and placed back on the “buck pole” by Wardens and a Waupaca County deputy.

Illegal Deer Cases

- ***A Day Early*** - Warden Mike Stahl (Oconto Falls) received a DNR Hotline complaint on the Friday before the deer season that two subjects were involved in taking a large buck the night before. Warden Stahl asked for assistance from Wardens Jim Horne (Shawano) and Ryan Volenberg (Two Rivers). The investigation revealed that a buck was in fact killed the day before season.
- On Sunday 11/20/05, Warden Jeff Knorr (Fremont) investigated a complaint of hunters trespassing and retrieving a deer without tagging it for several hours. Warden Knorr responded and found a member of the hunting party with two warrants for his arrest and that the shooter of a deer failed to tag the deer. Both hunters were also cited for trespass by the Sheriff's Department.
- Warden Todd Wippermann responded to a report of a subject who had intentionally run over a large buck within the city limits of Clintonville – killing it. The individual hit the deer at such a high rate of speed that deer was in quite bad shape after the impact. A witness observed the incident take place, then reported it after he spooked the driver. The truck's owner just spent a bunch of money building up a “Monster” type mud runner, complete with giant mud tires and illegally high suspension, etc. When he saw the buck he accelerated in hopes of filling his deer tag; charges are filed.
- Wardens Brian Knepper and Chris Wunrow of Washburn County contacted a group of hunters near the Birchwood area. The hunters had four illegally tagged antlerless deer in the back of a truck. The deer were tagged with Unit 20 bonus tags, while they were in Unit 17. While investigating this incident, the wardens also took an uncased/loaded 30-30 out of one of the vehicles.
- Wardens Richard Thole (Polk County) and Ryan Ellifson observed a hunter on an ATV leaving a pole shed. The ATV operator didn't see the wardens and continued into the woods. Thole parked his squad next to a truck that was parked near the pole shed and waited for the hunter to return. The wardens got out of the truck and after a short time they heard something inside the shed. The wardens knocked on the door and someone inside the shed opened the overhead garage door holding a knife. The wardens observed two deer hanging and one deer on the floor. Two of the deer were untagged. Thole found numerous stands on the property that were illegally baited. Two deer were seized and charges filed on three subjects.
- Warden Russ Fell of Rice Lake investigated a complaint of three untagged deer found in the woods. After an investigation, it was learned that a hunter shot three deer over the course of opening day. The suspect left the deer ungutted until the end of shooting hours on opening day.
- On the last day of the season, Warden Georg Wagner (Eau Claire) was monitoring a field full of deer in Clark County when he observed a vehicle stop abruptly on the shoulder of the road. Four hunters quickly exited the vehicle and dressed in blaze orange. The hunters walked off the road and opened fire on the deer herd. Wagner contacted the hunters as they were in the process of dragging two antlerless deer to their vehicle. Neither deer had been tagged; the deer were seized and citations were issued.

- Warden Mike Nice (Richland Center) and Barbara Wolf (Regional Warden, Fitchburg) investigated a case where a hunter shot five deer by 9 AM. None of the deer were tagged or field dressed when contacted by the wardens at 3 PM.
- Warden Jeff King (Darlington) assisted with a high speed pursuit that involved a sheriff's deputy chasing a suspect who had exited a field road at a high rate of speed and had an untagged deer in the truck after dark. The investigation is still ongoing, but to date, several criminal charges for poaching, felony fleeing, and violating probation are pending. King seized what was left of a turkey, a red fox, and a large antlered whitetail buck.
- Warden David Horzewski (Reedsburg) and Deputy Warden Paul Zajackowski contacted one hunter who shot a large buck in the morning. The hunter returned later in the day and shot a second large buck. The wardens located the hunter who was carrying the buck out of the woods in a small boat which was being dragged behind an ATV. The hunter had not tagged the second buck.

Illegal Road Hunting

- Warden Amie Egstad (Neenah) and Recreational Safety Warden April Dombrowski (Oshkosh) were watching a deer drive occurring south of Seymour when a deer ran towards a road. A hunter from the group drove along the road, got out and shot two times at the deer while standing less than 50' of the road's center. The deer then ran across the road. The shooter jumped back in his vehicle with the gun on his lap. By the time wardens made contact, the shooter turned the vehicle around and stopped at a second spot about 150 yards from the first spot. The shooter got out of his vehicle and stood on the pavement behind his vehicle shooting once again, killing deer.
- The Friday before the season started, Regional Warden Mike Bartz responded to a poaching call south of Shell Lake in Washburn County. A witness observed a vehicle stop and shoot a deer from the passenger window. The vehicle, shooter and the deer were located with assistance from Washburn County Sheriff's Deputies. The weapon had been hidden in a barn but was recovered.
- Warden Rick DeWitte (Cassville) received a complaint from the Grant County Sheriff's Department from a citizen who observed a deer shot from the roadway in northern Grant County. DeWitte contacted the complainant who stated that a car with three individuals was driving along a county highway near private property owned by his relatives. One shot was heard coming from the vehicle and a doe fawn dropped on the hillside. DeWitte later located the individuals. The driver was a convicted felon who was not hunting. He was driving two of his friends, who had hunting licenses, but not driver's licenses to the public hunting grounds. The passenger shot from the rear window of the vehicle using a 30-06 rifle.

Licensing and Revocation Violations

- On opening morning Warden Judi Nigbor (Montello) and Warden Supervisor Carl Mesman (Wautoma) were walking through a wooded 40 acre parcel attempting to locate a revoked hunter. The hunter was located when the wardens heard the hunter fire one time in very close proximity. As the wardens approached the hunter, Warden Nigbor noticed a dead deer lying on the ground close to where the wardens had been walking through the woods. At the time the deer was shot, the hunter didn't see the wardens and wardens didn't see the hunter. The hunter was contacted and apprehended for hunting during a period of revocation.
- Warden Dave Algrem (Wautoma) and Regional Warden Byron Goetsch (Green Bay) checked an area previously found to be baited. Wardens found three deer hanging near a trailer. A male hunter was observed walking towards camp wearing his official Chicago Bears sweatshirt and carrying a rifle. On the back of this burnt orange sweatshirt, the man displayed a backtag belonging to a female.

Further investigation revealed the man was a convicted felon and did not purchase a license, but rather borrowed a license from a female acquaintance as he had done in years past.

- Warden Scott Thiede (Eau Claire) approached a car parked along a dead-end roadway. Startled by the warden's presence, the front seat passenger frantically attempted to unload an uncased lever action .30-30 rifle. After taking control of the loaded rifle, Warden Thiede determined that the man had just returned to the car after hunting deer without a license – a crime. Warden Thiede had the man seated in his patrol truck as he used his mobile computer to verify the man's identity. During the process, the man slipped off his pack boots, as if he was getting comfortable and wanted to stay awhile. In fact, the opposite was true. As the computer screen flashed WANTED PERSON, the subject sprang from the vehicle, sailed over a barbed wire fence, and ran stocking footed across a slushy snow covered field. He, of course, was later arrested and charged accordingly.
- Late opening morning, Wardens Russ Wilson (La Crosse) and Henry Bauman (Onalaska) found a man sleeping in a truck with a shotgun not fully cased in the bed of a truck. Upon investigation, the wardens discovered the man illegally shot at a buck and doe that morning while hunting deer. Wardens will be filling charges in La Crosse County for hunting deer without a license.
- Warden John Buss (Sauk City) received a complaint from a person who had suspicions about nonresident hunters near his property. Buss and Warden Mike Green (Wisconsin Dells) checked on the hunters and found a resident hunter who was hunting after hours. They also found three hunters from Texas; two of the three hunters had resident licenses. The two Texas hunters also had resident licenses from three previous years in their back tag holders. The third Texas hunter was the wife of one of the other hunters, and she did not have any license at all.
- Wardens Dale Hochhausen and Jason Roberts contacted a hunter as he was getting back to the parking lot of a State Wildlife Area in Racine County. As Roberts checked the individual's backtag, Roberts saw the person had an archery backtag underneath his gun deer backtag. The backtags were issued to two different individuals. The individual admitted to using his brother's gun deer backtag because his brother had gone to Arkansas for the gun deer season.

Hunting While Intoxicated Cases

- Acting on a complaint, Wardens Rick Koch and Tim Otto (Forest County) arrested an intoxicated hunter in the Cavour area. The hunter was observed by other hunters to be driving erratically and they believed he was under the influence as he went to his deer stand. Wardens Koch and Otto located the suspect's vehicle and were able to make contact with the suspect in his deer stand. The suspect was obviously intoxicated and when asked, he stated that he was hunting alone. A short time later the suspect was asked where his son was. He later remembered that he was hunting with him but was not able to tell the wardens exactly where the boy was hunting. Koch was able to track the 13 year old boy to a stand in the area. The suspect was arrested for hunting while intoxicated and after some investigation, it was determined that the suspect was also a convicted felon.
- Warden Jesse Ashton of Polk County was working a complaint of a subject transporting uncased firearms on ATV's near Clam Falls. Ashton contacted a subject with a loaded 30.06 rifle walking out of the woods. Upon contact, Ashton detected the smell of an intoxicating beverage on the subject's breath. Four field sobriety tests later the subject was arrested for hunting while intoxicated. The subject's preliminary breath test was a .186 BAC; 2.3 times the prohibited vehicle level.
- Warden Bill Miller (Adams) contacted a hunter who was intoxicated. Miller transported him to the Adams County Jail for booking and collecting a breath sample, which was .16 BAC; twice the prohibited vehicle level.

Deer Shining Violations

- On the last Saturday of the season, Warden Barry Fetting was working early morning deer shining enforcement in Rusk County. Fetting attempted to stop a vehicle that was shining, but the vehicle fled. He gave pursuit until it stopped at a nearby farm. Warden Jeremy Peery quickly arrived and assisted Fetting's search for the operator to no avail. After several minutes, a Sheriff's Deputy arrived and searched the area with his K-9. Although the dog hit on a set of tracks which lead from the vehicle to the back of a barn, no one was found. Peery then arranged for the vehicle to be towed from the residence to be processed for evidence. Later in the day an individual called Peery's residence to accept responsibility.
- The night before opening day of the gun deer season, Wardens Richard Thole, Ron Cork and Ryan Ellifson worked night enforcement near Rice Beds Creek Wildlife Area in Polk County. Ellifson heard a single gun shot close to his location at 12:30 AM. Ellifson also heard an engine start up shortly after that. The wardens patrolled the area looking for suspicious activity. Ellifson observed two people closing a shed door just south of his location. Ellifson made contact with a man and his wife and found them to be in possession of an untagged doe deer. Ellifson learned that the man's wife came home early that morning and saw the deer standing in the backyard. The wife woke up her husband and he shot the deer from his deck while she held a spotlight on it.
- Wardens Russ Fell and Jeremy Peery investigated a complaint of a suspect who shot from a vehicle from the road while shining deer near Chetek. The suspect left the area before law enforcement could arrive. The 18 year old suspect was later arrested by Rusk county deputies for reckless use of a weapon and battery. The suspect was out of jail on bond for burglary and fleeing an officer when this latest incident happened.
- Warden Scott Bowe (Cornell) received two complaints minutes apart on the evening of opening day regarding someone shining and shooting in the Boyd area. The two complaints were a few miles apart and both described a similar vehicle. Warden Bowe investigated and found the suspect vehicle parked at a residence in the area of the complaints. The warden interviewed three individuals at the residence and found that they had been shining a baited area behind their residence with uncased rifles in the vehicle. They then drove down a county highway and attempted to shoot two deer while shining. The driver of the vehicle shined while the two passengers each shot at the deer. Warden Bowe seized their firearms and spotlight. The three men will be charged with hunting deer with the aid of an artificial light, shining deer while in possession of a firearm and transporting uncased firearms.

Felons in possession of firearms cases

- Warden Jeremy Cords of Polk County worked a complaint where a person later identified as a felon had shot and then borrowed another's license to tag a spike buck. Warden Cords identified the parties involved, seized the deer, issued citations and will be forwarding reports to the Burnett County District Attorney regarding the Felon in Possession of a Firearm.
- Warden Joe Frost (Dodgeville) and Deputy Warden Alan Erickson received a Hotline call about a felon hunting with someone else's license. Wardens located the suspect in the woods with a firearm while wearing a back tag that belonged to his daughter. The suspect will be charged as a felon in possession of a firearm, hunting deer without a license and borrowing another's license.
- Warden Dave Wood (Madison) was checking out a deer carcass complaint when he encountered a deer hunter dressed in blaze orange riding a bike down the road north of Stoughton. The hunter had an uncased shotgun. Wood contacted the hunter who turned out to be a subject Wood had cited over

10 years ago for waterfowl and drug violations. Wood ran a check on the hunter and found him to be a convicted felon. Wood seized the shotgun and will refer the information to the Dane County DA's office for prosecution.

- Warden Joe Frost (Dodgeville) and Deputy Warden Erickson observed a truck parked in the middle of a corn field near the end of shooting hours. Wardens contacted the driver at the nearby residence where a partially uncased gun was on the front seat. As wardens were issuing a citation, a car pulled in the driveway. The driver of the car appeared intoxicated, had open beer in the car and it was found he was a convicted felon in possession of a rifle. A couple minutes later, an ATV drove down the state highway and pulled into the residence. The ATV driver possessed a loaded rifle and the passenger had a loaded and uncased rifle. Two illegal deer were found in the garage shot by the felon. The sheriff's department assisted and arrested the felon for OWI, 4th offense. In total, seven citations and two criminal charges were issued to the group; two deer and one rifle were seized.
- While checking licenses in Green County, Warden Jennifer Niemeyer (Kenosha) recognized an individual's name on his backtag as a convicted felon. The subject had marijuana and paraphernalia on his person. Niemeyer also found marijuana and paraphernalia on another subject in the same hunting party.
- Wardens Bob Stroess (Manitowoc) and Jon Scharbarth (Reedsville) investigated a complaint, related to a convicted felon hunting deer, to see if there were any group deer hunting violations. The hunter was indeed hunting and was in fact a felon. He was contacted at a registration station, casually interviewed, photographed with his deer and then told the bad news. He was arrested and turned over to the Manitowoc County Sheriff's Department.
- Wardens Matt Modjeski (Sparta) and Russ Wilson (La Crosse) investigated a complaint of a felon on probation that had reportedly shot deer. Wardens questioned the felon who denied possessing a firearm, but admitted to using or allowing the use of his deer carcass tag on a deer shot by a hunter. A citation was issued for a group deer hunting violation and a Monroe County Sheriff's Deputy arrested the felon on a warrant. Modjeski contacted the felon's probation agent as required. As part of the follow-up investigation, Modjeski ran checks on other members of the group as reported by the felon. Two of the felon's brothers are also felony offenders. You guessed it – they also used their carcass tags on deer and denied possessing a firearm. Citations were issued and a total of five deer were seized.
- Wardens Eric Grudzinski (Mauston) and Chris Spaight contacted a hunter that was a convicted felon, had not purchased a deer hunting license and was borrowing a friend's backtag. The subject was arrested and charges were filed.
- Wardens Jim Cleven (Colfax) and Wayne Flak (Menomonie) investigated a complaint where a wild turkey was shot from a vehicle. Upon locating the suspect, he denied any wrong doing, but was found to have illegal drugs and a few turkey feathers in the vehicle; he was also a convicted felon. He later confessed that he shot the turkey with his "slug gun."

Non-Deer Related Poaching Cases

- Warden Korey Trowbridge (Schofield) received a complaint from a person who had seen several turkeys in his yard and then heard .22 gunshots in the area. Trowbridge responded and was able to recover a wounded turkey. Trowbridge then followed the blood trail and turkey tracks through fresh snow to a bait pile behind a nearby residence. Foot tracks were evident from the suspect's house to the bait pile, which followed the blood trail. Trowbridge made contact at the suspect's residence and seized a .17 caliber rifle. Two men at the house identified their brother as being responsible.

Trowbridge made contact with the suspect later that night. The man admitted to building a shooting backstop, placing the corn bait, shooting 10-15 times from the deck, and hitting 5-6 turkeys. Citations totaling \$1224 were issued for hunting turkeys over bait, hunting turkeys with a rifle, and hunting turkeys without a permit. The man has never taken a hunter education class or purchased a hunting license.

- On the Saturday of the opening weekend, Wardens David Walz (Watertown) and Matt Meade checked anglers along the Rock River in Jefferson County. They watched several people catching crappies at a rapid rate. They contacted six anglers on two successive days catching in excess of their bag limits. A total of 6 citations were issued for possession of fish in excess of daily bag limits, with 222 crappies confiscated from the fishermen. Comments were made by the suspects to other fishermen that the “DNR should be checking deer hunters this time of year, not fishermen!” It was apparent they felt comfortable that the wardens would not be around.

Other deer hunting violations:

- Wardens Mike Nice and Chuck Horn (Warden Supervisor, Dodgeville) located a deer hunter on Thanksgiving Day while wearing complete camouflage. The hunter stated he hunted all morning by stalking and was staying on his own property while hunting. A citation was issued to the hunter for not wearing blaze orange while hunting during the gun deer season.
- One morning at 6:00 AM, Warden Marty Stone (Fennimore) observed a vehicle pull into a soybean field and headlight deer. Seconds later, several rifles shots were heard coming from near the vehicle. Stone was not able to get to the vehicle before it left the scene; however, he did recover the deer that was shot and documented tire and foot impressions. Stone staked out the area on Sunday and later in the morning the same vehicle returned. Stone arrested the suspect with an uncased and loaded firearm and an improper deer license. The suspect confessed to head lighting and shooting a deer the day before.
- Warden Dave Youngquist (Spring Green) received a call of a large buck that was shot on Wednesday during the closed season. The deer was reportedly shot by a landowner from his house. The neighboring landowners were very upset that the buck was shot out of season; this may have ended several friendships for this landowner. The buck was confiscated and the hunter’s rifle was seized; citations are pending.
- Warden Mitchell observed a man dressed in blaze orange, with no back tag displayed and holding a shotgun in the Jackson public hunting grounds. The hunter was found to be from Georgia and was hunting deer with birdshot. After explaining to the hunter that it is not legal to hunt deer in Wisconsin with birdshot, he drew a loaded .357 handgun from under his shirt and said can I hunt with this? The hunter was issued two citations.
- ***Always remember that this job is dangerous!*** Wardens Russ Wilson (La Crosse) and Henry Bauman (Onalaska) will also be filing reports with the La Crosse County DA’s office for a decision on charging a hunter for pointing a loaded 7mm Magnum rifle at the wardens. No shots were fired.

Search and Rescue efforts:

Statewide, wardens responded to several calls for their service in searching for lost persons. The following are some examples;

- On Sunday, November 20, at around 9:30 PM., Warden Jim Horne (Shawano) received a phone call from the Shawano County Sheriffs Department that two hunters were lost on the Navarino Public Hunting Grounds. The hunters used their cell phone to call home and state they were lost. Wardens Todd Wippermann (Clintonville) and Mike Young (Shiocton) were also on their way to the area. At around 11:30 PM, Warden Young located the lost hunters using a local resident's boat to assist in the process. The hunters were cold and tired, but otherwise unhurt.
- On Thanksgiving Day, Deputy Warden Feind was flagged down by a hunting party that reported a member was over an hour late from a deer drive. By utilizing his squad's PA system from a high vantage point, the missing person heard his name and came out of the vast Brule Bog to Deputy Warden Feind. The individual was returned to his extremely appreciative hunting party.
- Warden Matt Weber (Necedah) assisted a Juneau County Deputy with locating a lost hunter in Juneau County on the opening weekend of deer season. Weber and the Deputy located the hunter after dark in the river bottoms of the Yellow River on an island surrounded by water. The hunter did not have a flashlight, compass and was wet. He was transported by Necedah Ambulance to the hospital in Mauston and treated for hypothermia.
- Warden Jim Cleven (Colfax) and Deputy Warden Gary Schwoch were requested by the Sheriff's Department to assist them in locating a deer hunter who felt he was having a stroke or heart attack. Wardens used an ATV to transport a stretcher to the victim who was in woods far off the road. The victim was conscious and alert and was carried in the stretcher by emergency responders to a waiting ambulance. The victim was transported to the hospital by ambulance.

Licenses and Tag System

Perhaps two anecdotal stories tell it all: In one case, a local judge called the local warden on his cell phone from the field to be sure he had properly tagged his deer; in a second case, a Minnesota warden could not understand which tag to use on a deer.

The deer tagging system has generated more questions and confusion for hunters this year. Hunters often wonder which tag should be used in what unit. Wardens contacted hunting parties that had no idea the free T-zone tags couldn't be used in the unit they were hunting. In one instance, a party of six experienced hunters was found looking at the regulations and arguing over the legal use of this tag with three being sure they were right and three being sure that they were. During field contacts wardens report they received many questions about season and tagging this year. This is also a burden on the registration stations that are conscientious about looking at tags on deer brought into them. Registration stations reported many people erroneously placed T-Zone tags on deer under situations that did not allow it.

The solution most frequently offered by many wardens is to not issue the extra T-Zone tags with each license – instead, have hunters obtain their unit specific tag when they buy their license. Clearly identify in large bold type what deer management unit it's for and what type of deer it can be used on.

Wardens did share other suggestions that should be considered for future changes:

- Suggestion for tag identification - Change of name to one name: "Antlerless tags." Many thought the old system with naming of permits was confusing with Zone T, antlerless, bonus antlerless, etc. The new system called all the antlerless tags – "antlerless." This seemed on its face to be a simplification. Problem was that the important information then became secondary. Important information was printed in small type.

- A simple fix seems to be to make the Unit designation, in bold larger print, similar in size to the license year and ahead of the words on the top of the tag “Antlerless Deer Carcass Tag.”
- Distinguish buck tags from antlerless tags by printing a picture of a buck or doe on the respective tag.

There is deep concern throughout the warden service that the complexity of our ever-changing regulations are having a detrimental effect on our efforts to recruit and retain hunters. Deer hunters, and the wardens who educate and promote hunting, are in desperate need of regulation simplification and consistency from year to year. There are so many different seasons between Zone T, CWD, Regular, Metro, and likely Earn-a-Buck next year. Everyone has a hard time keeping track of the regulations. Consequently, wardens are inundated with phone calls both before and during the season with deer regulation questions. The complexity makes it nearly impossible to print an error free regulation book that accurately reflects the law. This, of course, compounds the problem. Because of the complex regulations and confusion, wardens are often confronted with hunter “mistakes” which puts the warden in a difficult situation and makes the hunter feel bad, if not terrible, about their hunting experience. Many of the comments in the wardens’ narratives deal with the public’s confusion and the warden’s frustration.

Our deer hunters have a great interest in deer hunting, but are not equally interested in reading page after page of continuously changing regulations. We overestimate the public’s ability (or ours for that matter) to understand complex regulations before hunting. We don’t want to make violators out of honest people, drive hunters away from the sport, or make it easier for lawbreakers to hide behind and leverage the confusion complexity creates. **IT IS CRITICAL WE SIMPLIFY THIS BEFORE NEXT SEASON.**

Problems as well as positives encountered with the CWD seasons:

With the exception of 3 DMU’s, and a fraction of one county, the entire South Central region is in CWD zones. Having an either sex deer hunt significantly increased hunting pressure on the opening weekend of the traditional 9-day season even though a gun deer hunt had gone on in the DEZ since late October.